

वर्ग / विषय : DEPARTMENT / SUBJECT: Other state matters

पत्रिकेचे नाव : NAME OF THE NEWS PAPER: The Hindu

दिनांक : DATE: 21/3/2020

Kamal Nath resigns ahead of floor test; BJP set to form government

With a strength of 104 MLAs in truncated House, saffron party has clear majority

SIDHARTH YADAV
BHOVAL

Ending 18 days of political drama, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath on Friday submitted his resignation to Governor Lalji Tandon, ahead of the Supreme Court-mandated floor test.

Mr. Nath said he would rather stick to his political values and principles of 40 years than compromise. "I will continue to stick to my values. This is my strength," he told reporters at his official residence. "I will continue to struggle along with each member of the Congress family in people's interest."

Mr. Tandon accepted the resignation and asked Mr. Nath to continue as caretaker Chief Minister, Raj Bhavan sources said.

Earlier, on Thursday night, M.P. Assembly Speaker N.P. Prajapati accepted the resignation of



Conceding defeat: Kamal Nath addressing a press conference in Bhopal before submitting his resignation. ■ A.M. FARUQU

16 rebel Congress MLAs, who are at a resort in Bengaluru since March 9, sealing the fate of the embattled government. The Speaker had accepted resignation of six rebel MLAs on March 14. The strength of the Congress in the 231-member House was down to 92. On Friday morning,

BJP MLA Sharad Kol, who in the past had cross-voted with the Congress, also quit.

With the resignations, the strength of the Assembly stands at 205, with the simple majority mark at 103. The BJP with 104 MLAs has a clear majority.

Moments after the govern-

ment fell, BJP leader Arvind Bhardoriya said independent MLAs as well those from the BSP and the SP had shifted their support to the saffron party.

Speaking to reporters after Mr. Nath's resignation, former Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, who is the front-runner for the top post again, said the Congress-led government had fallen under its own weight.

"The BJP has never been in the game of saving or toppling governments. The situation turned so explosive that Congress's own friends got upset seeing the State's downfall under Mr. Nath," he added. Those around Mr. Nath, including Congress MP Digvijaya Singh, created such a situation that the government fell, Mr. Chouhan said, adding: "They must introspect."

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Other BJP leaders in the running for Chief Minister are party chief whip Narottam Mishra as well as Union Ministers Narendra Singh Tomar from Gwalior and Thawarchand Gehlot from Nagda, a prominent face for the party from the Scheduled Castes.

Taking to Twitter, former Congress leader Jyotiraditya Scindia, whose switch to the BJP along with a bloc of 22 MLAs triggered the collapse of the 15-month Nath government, declared that the people of the State had won.

"I have always believed that politics should be a medium of public service, however the State government strayed from this path.

Truth has won again," he said. In his resignation letter to Mr. Tandon, Mr. Nath wrote: "In the 40 years of my public life, I have always practised politics of principles and given precedence to democratic values. Whatever has happened in the past two weeks, it is a new chapter in the devaluation of democratic values."

Mr. Nath offered his best wishes to the next Chief Minister and said his cooperation would be with him in the development of the State at all times. "I have never fallen for the politics of auction and transactions. I have done clean politics," the Congress leader said.

(With PTI inputs)